



## Future Homeowners Maria Herrera and Family



“I love to serve and I do it with joy.” This is the response Maria Herrera gave when asked what she does in her spare time. In fact, within the St. Philips Catholic Church, which she attends, her reputation of joyful service is well known.

Maria emigrated from Colombia 16 years ago, leaving behind a difficult marriage. “Those days with my ex-husband were emotionally traumatizing, and it has taken me years to recover. My hope for the future is that I will live a life of peace and service to others.”

She came to the United States without speaking a word of English, so her job prospects were limited. “I moved to New Jersey where my brother lived. I worked as a waitress and a cook among other jobs that allowed me to care for my young child.” But determined to build a better life for herself and her son, Maria enrolled in Passay Community College to master the English language.

In 2005, Maria; her mother, Estella; and her son Abraham relocated to Middle Tennessee to be near her sister. “It was pretty rough in New Jersey. There was a lot of gang activity, and I worried all the time about my son. I love living somewhere safe, but it has been tough to make ends meet in Williamson County. We live in a 2-bedroom apartment, so I share my room with my son. Abraham is ecstatic about having a room of his own!”

Abraham, a budding musician, dreams of attending The Juilliard School of Music. “I play guitar and I am hopeful that I can begin writing songs as well. Having my own room will allow me to practice without disturbing my mom.”

Today Maria works two jobs, one as a cashier at Costco and a second as a part-time administrative assistant at St. Phillips Church. “I hope that I can work fewer hours once I purchase my home. I want to spend more time with Abraham. He is 16 years old, so I do not have very many more years left with him at home. Because rent in Franklin is so expensive, I have had to work many hours to provide for my family. With a stable, affordable mortgage, I know I can devote more time to serving others.”

Maria is overwhelmed with gratitude, often to the point of tears. “We are so grateful to everyone at Habitat for Humanity for this opportunity. It is a blessing to have the community gather together to help our family. My hope is that my home will extend beyond blessing only my family and that it will become a blessing for others as well.”

The Herrera family will build in partnership with 2019 Women Build beginning April 11, 2019.